

State Senator · Irma Clark-Coleman

Serving the 3rd District Constituents in Detroit

Budget Update: Process Improves Over Last Year

At this writing, the FY 2008-09 budget process is underway and Lansing is hopeful that it will be resolved by early summer. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle want to avoid the shameful display of partisanship that stalled our state government for weeks and resulted in a brief shutdown last October.

This year we continue to be mindful of protecting programs that provide essential services to our most vulnerable citizens. The budget is currently in the process of being developed. The first step has been completed, with the Senate passing the following budgets:

- **Community Colleges** statewide received a 3% overall increase. The budget includes reserved funding recommendations for nursing programs.
- The **Community Health** budget is \$6 million less than the Governor's overall recommendation. Funding was reduced for the Healthy Michigan Fund, mental health courts, Medicaid coverage for 19- and 20-year olds, home-based care programs and efforts to combat STDs and resistant staph infections. *Every Senate Democrat voted against this budget bill because of proposed cuts to the needy.*

- The **Corrections** budget matches the Governor's recommendation. It reduces funding for central office operations by 22%, reduces beds at seven facilities and closes the Scott Correctional Facility.
- **K-12** funding was increased by \$71 per student. Districts with the lowest per pupil spending will receive an increase of \$142 per student. About \$20 million in funding for declining enrollment schools was restored to current-year levels. Sen. Clark-Coleman introduced an amendment to increase early childhood education by \$24 million along with an amendment to create a small high schools plan (\$32 million) but her amendments were not adopted by a majority.
- The **Higher Education** budget includes a 3% across-the-board increase for all state universities.
- The next step in the process is for the House to do its work with the results of both chambers moving to Conference Committee for final determination. Again, we are hopeful that a compromise will be reached that will retain these proposed increases.

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What Our Local Institutions of Higher Learning Stand to Gain:

(includes State matching funds)



- Wayne State University – \$7.8 million to construct bio-medical research building
- University of Michigan – Dearborn – \$54 million to build science building
- Henry Ford Community College – \$15 million to complete science building renovations
- Wayne County Community College District – \$42 million to acquire instructional facility in northwest Detroit



Dear Constituents,

As we embark on another budget year, I am hopeful that all legislators will work together to move our state forward. Both leaders of the state Senate and House have agreed to move wisely but expeditiously.

We are in a better financial position than we were last year at this time. While we may have a few dollars to put away in our “rainy day” fund, we must still be ever so careful to watch how we spend our dollars.

While lawmakers are minding the state’s bottom line, we are also aware of the housing crisis that has so many of our residents losing or about to lose their homes. That is why both Democrats and Republicans joined together to pass a group of bills that allows the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to help homeowners with Adjustable Rate Mortgages transfer to 30-year fixed-rate loans and aid those who have fixed-rate loans get more affordable interest rates. In all, your lawmakers are working for you.

I have enjoyed speaking with each of you at events in our District. Your support makes it possible for me to offer bills to mandate Kindergarten instruction and attendance and to give financial aid to those who take care of their minor-age relatives. Together, we can make Michigan work for us all.

Sincerely,

Irma Clark-Coleman

State Senator • 3rd District

Sen. Clark-Coleman Protects Seniors

Sen. Clark-Coleman and the Senate Democrats introduced a ten-bill package this month designed to protect senior citizens from predators. Called “Safeguard Our Seniors,” the bills increase penalties for violators and provide prosecutors with additional tools to take legal action against them.

The legislative action helped kick off “Older Americans Awareness Month” and is based on recommendations made by Governor Jennifer Granholm’s Task Force on Elder Abuse. Sen. Clark-Coleman’s portion of the package gives seniors more protections against ill-advised purchases of variable annuity insurance contracts.

“There is no greater criminal than those who prey on our most vulnerable citizens, our children and seniors,” said Sen. Clark-Coleman. “These new bills send a strong message that this behavior will not be tolerated, and that the severity of punishment will equal the vile nature of crimes against defenseless seniors.”

Kinship financial Aid Package Moves in Senate

It looks like people who take care of their minor-age relatives will finally get financial relief. Sen. Clark-Coleman’s legislation, Senate Bill 170, which gives relative caregivers the same financial payments as foster parents, was recently approved by a Senate committee and is expected to be passed by the full Senate soon.

After six years of Sen. Clark-Coleman’s advocacy, Senate leaders have realized that non-traditional families can be found all around this state, not just in inner-city households.

From the UP to Monroe and from Grand Rapids to Port Huron, more grandparents are taking on the responsibility of rearing their grandchildren because of parental death, drug use, mental illness, or military activity.

“It does not matter their race, financial status or even political leanings. They all need our help to sustain their families and keep them together,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said.

There is nearly \$5 million in the budget to place children in

permanent homes with relatives who love them.

While this isn’t enough to move all 16,000 children from state care into homes with their relatives, it’s enough to begin to chip away at a system that has grown out of control.

Gov. Granholm has made it a priority to move children from foster care to permanent homes. Sen. Clark-Coleman is working closely with the Department of Human Services to make sure it happens on her watch.

Senator Clark-Coleman Receives Collegiate Honor



Dr. Gail Mee, President of HFCC, presents Senator Clark-Coleman with the Distinguished Service Award.

Henry Ford Community College recently presented Sen. Clark-Coleman with the prestigious *Distinguished Service Award* before hundreds of graduates and their families at the college’s annual commencement ceremony held at the Ford Performing Arts Center in Dearborn.

“I am humbled by Henry Ford Community College’s generosity,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said. “I work tirelessly to bring a continued stream of funding to HFCC, UM – Dearborn, WSU and WCCCD. I believe that investment in education will lead Michigan to higher ground.”

Sen. Clark-Coleman was selected for the award “in recognition of the significant service provided to the college and community,” wrote Lisa M. Masi, HFCC’s Records, Degree Audit and Commencement Manager, in a letter to the Senator.

Clark-Coleman focuses on Small Schools

A constant advocate of public education, Sen. Clark-Coleman believes smaller high schools with focused curriculums will stem the tide of high school dropouts in Detroit. She has traveled to New York, Atlanta and Rhode Island touring small high schools and meeting with educators who have implemented the new system in their school districts.

“Detroit needs to change the way we educate our children,” Sen. Clark-Coleman said. “I truly believe that by making schools smaller and more tailored in their approach, we can reach those students who have all but given up on themselves.”

Gov. Granholm is also an ardent supporter of small schools as is Dr. Connie Calloway, General Superintendent of Detroit Public

Schools. The Granholm Administration is working with the Skillman Foundation to expand and develop small high schools. The Skillman Foundation is playing a leadership role in encouraging and organizing foundation support for small high schools in Southeast Michigan. Detroit Public Schools has partnered with Apple, Inc. to establish a small “digital learning community.”

Booster Seat Law Enacted

Beginning July 1, 2008, children between the ages of four and eight and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall will have to sit in booster seats while riding in automobiles. Current law requires children under age four to ride in an infant or child car seat. The new law extends the requirement to include older children who also are not optimally protected by seat belts alone.

According to the Partners for Child Passenger Safety, risk of injury for a 4- to 8-year-old child is reduced by 59 percent when using a car seat or booster seat. A recent study by the group also found that children in seat belts alone are four times more likely to suffer head/brain injuries as compared to those in booster seats.

The Legislature is considering a bill that will make it possible to provide free booster seats to low-income families.



Sen. Clark-Coleman reads to first grade students at Courtis Elementary School in Detroit.

Home foreclosure Help



State lawmakers recently joined together to help Michigan’s homeowners keep their homes. The package of bills – called “Save the Dream” – was supported by both Senate and House members, Democrat and Republican alike. Gov. Granholm signed it into law in April.

Save the Dream gives the Michigan State Housing Development Authority the power to make two major actions:

- help qualifying homeowners with an Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM) convert their mortgage to a 30-year, fixed-rate, conventional loan; and
- help at-risk homeowners who have missed one or more payments get into a more affordable 30-year, fixed-rate, conventional loan.

Household income must be under \$108,000 and the purchase price of the home cannot exceed \$224,500. The initiatives will be funded by taxable bonds, and homeowners will be responsible for paying off the full value of their refinanced mortgages.

For more details on the Save the Dream refinance products and other services, go to www.michigan.gov/mshda and click on the Save the Dream icon where up-to-date information about the loans, services, and MSHDA-approved lenders and certified counselors is available. The toll-free hotline is **1-866-946-7432**.



Sen. Clark-Coleman greets Detroit Renaissance High School Students Starlyn Robinson and Dilara Uskup who were at the Capitol to attend the Youth In Government Leadership Breakfast.



Sen. Clark-Coleman and her Chief of Staff, Gary Pollard, visit with Bob Brown (far left) and Roland Crosby (2nd right) on their tour of the state Capitol. Both men represent the Barton-McFarland Neighborhood Association in Detroit.



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Full-Day Kindergarten Closer to Reality

Michigan will soon be one of nine states that requires full-day Kindergarten attendance and instruction. Governor Granholm gave the matter high priority during her annual State of the State Address.

While talking about the benefits of early education, Gov. Granholm bestowed special recognition upon Sen. Clark-Coleman for sponsoring Senate Bill 162, which calls for mandatory attendance and full-day Kindergarten instruction.

Sen. Clark-Coleman has introduced her mandatory Kindergarten bill every year she has served in the Senate. A strong education advocate, she believes all of Michigan's children deserve the best education possible.



Sen. Clark-Coleman speaks at a press conference on her mandatory Kindergarten bill (SB 162) at John R. King Academic and Performing Arts Academy in Detroit. She is supported by Ms. Walker, a full-day Kindergarten teacher (far left); Doloris Smith-Jackson, President, LSCO (2nd left); J. R. King Principal Vivian Hughes-Norde (3rd left); Virginia Cantrell, President, Detroit Federation of Teachers (center); Sue Carnell, Deputy Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools (2nd right); and Emma Bell, Chair, Michigan Women's Commission (far right).

Renaissance High School Celebrated at State Capitol

Sen. Clark-Coleman honored Renaissance High School in the Senate chambers for being named the Top High School in Michigan and among the leading high schools in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* magazine.

Accepting the award on behalf of the school were Dr. Connie Calloway, General Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools, and Detroit Renaissance Principal Gail Russell-Jones. The famed Renaissance Singers performed for the state Senate, gaining special permission to appear on the Senate floor.

"While urban education has often been labeled as 'failing' and urban students as 'underachieving,' Detroit Renaissance has demonstrated that urban students in urban schools can achieve academic success far exceeding common expectations," Sen. Clark-Coleman said.



Sen. Clark-Coleman (far right), joins Detroit Renaissance High School's Renaissance Singers and Dr. Connie Calloway (far left), General Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools, on the group's visit to the State Capitol.



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